



ELECTION INSPECTORS' GUIDE FOR PAPER BALLOT VOTING SYSTEM

A Guide to the Procedures for Operating Your Precinct

**Michigan Department of State
Bureau of Elections**

April 2003

OPENING THE POLLS

1. Check the ballot container to ensure that it is completely empty.
2. Close and padlock or seal the ballot container.
3. Verify that you have the correct ballots for your precinct by proofing them against the Instruction Ballot.

**DO NOT ISSUE A BALLOT UNTIL THE
OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE POLLS AT 7:00 A.M.**

IMMEDIATELY NOTIFY THE CLERK OF ANY PROBLEMS!

CLOSING THE POLLS

The polls officially close at 8:00 p.m. Any voter standing in line at 8:00 p.m. must be allowed to vote.

Upon the closing of the polls and after the last ballot has been cast, inspectors must immediately prepare for the canvass.

1. Tie or wrap all unused ballots and remove them from the table. Also remove from the table any other materials that are not needed for the tally.
2. Place the ballot container in plain view of all persons present. The ballot container and the ballots that were removed from the container must remain in plain view at all times until the count is completed and the ballots are secured. Report any violations of this requirement to the clerk.
3. Compare the Poll Book and the Applications to Vote. They must reflect the same number of voters. Do not proceed with any vote tallying or counting until all mistakes are corrected and the numbers agree.
4. Account for all ballots. The number of voters according to the Poll Book, plus the number of unused, spoiled and rejected ballots must equal the number of ballots delivered to the precinct. Add the number of absent voter ballot envelopes that were delivered for processing (if applicable).
5. Open the ballot container and count the total number of ballots inside. **DO NOT UNFOLD THE BALLOTS AT THIS POINT.** If more than one type of ballot is involved, separate the ballots into separate piles before counting them.
6. If the number of ballots exceeds the number of voters according to the poll lists (Poll Book and completed Applications to Vote) double check your count. If the discrepancy remains, publicly draw out the excess number of ballots. Place these ballots in an envelope marked “EXCESS.” Note on the Remarks page in the Poll Book that this action was taken. Secure the envelope along with the used and unused ballots in the ballot container.
7. If the number of electors who voted in the election (according to the Poll Book and Applications to Vote) exceeds the number of ballots, enter the reason for the discrepancy (if known) in the Poll Book. If the reason is unknown, state accordingly in the Poll Book.

TALLYING AND COUNTING PRIMARY BALLOTS

1. Sort the ballots into separate piles (one pile each for partisan, non-partisan, delegate and proposal ballots). **Do not unfold the ballots at this time.**
2. Set aside ballots that can be counted instead of tallied. These include proposal ballots on which only one or two questions appear and ballots on which the names of no more than two candidates appear.
3. For the ballots which must be *tallied*, proceed as follows:

- a. One inspector calls out the names of the candidates who received votes while two other inspectors mark down the vote count. Each inspector must keep a separate count. For accuracy, a fourth inspector observes the ballots as the caller reads off the results.
 - b. The two inspectors designated to mark down the votes, using separate tally sheets, mark down one vertical line for each vote called. When the fifth vote is reached for a candidate, each inspector marks a slanted line through the other four. Each group of five lines is made within one of the boxes printed on the sheet. When each group of five is reached, each inspector calls “check.” If both do not call “check” at the same time, the reason for the count discrepancy must be identified and corrected before proceeding.
4. If the ballots can be **counted**, proceed as follows. (Ballots which can be counted are discussed under #2 above.)
 - a. Divide the ballots into piles for counting. If counting the vote on an office, divide by candidate vote. If counting the vote on a proposal, divide into “yes” and “no” piles. (If two questions appear on the ballot, the sorting procedure must be repeated for the second question.)
 - b. Count the ballots in each pile. After an inspector finishes counting a pile, another inspector should count it again to check the number. After each pile has been counted twice, enter the result in the Statement of Votes book. In addition, write “BALLOTS COUNTED -- NOT TALLIED” on the tally sheet.

PRECINCT DELEGATES

In a primary where precinct delegates are elected, a separate tally sheet and certificate of election containing the names and addresses of the winning delegates must be completed at the precinct. Write-in candidates for delegate must be checked against the precinct registration record to make certain the write-in candidates are registered voters in the precinct.

TALLYING AND COUNTING GENERAL ELECTION BALLOTS

1. Sort the ballots into separate piles (one pile each for partisan, non-partisan, and proposal ballots). **Do not unfold the ballots at this time.**
2. Set aside ballots that can be counted instead of tallied. These include proposal ballots on

which only one or two questions appear and ballots on which the names of no more than two candidates appear. *(Complete the count as explained above under “Tallying and Counting Primary Ballots.”)*

3. For the ballots which must be ***tallied***, proceed as follows:
 - a. Separate the straight, mixed and split ticket ballots into separate piles. Do not mistake a split or mixed ticket for a straight ticket. *(See page 8 for further information on straight, mixed and split tickets.)*
 - b. First, two inspectors ***count*** the ***straight ticket ballots***. *(A tally is not needed.)* Each inspector must keep a separate count and post the results in the straight ticket column of the tally sheet.
 - c. Next, ***tally*** the ***split or mixed ticket ballots*** as explained above under “Tallying and Counting Primary Ballots.”
 - d. Add straight and mixed-split ticket totals and enter the sum in the total column of the tally sheet.

PREPARING THE STATEMENT OF VOTES

Prepare the Statement of Votes as follows (*a minimum of 3 copies are required for most elections*):

1. Enter the vote totals as shown on the tally sheets in the spaces provided on the Statement of Votes.
2. Enter the proper wording for any proposal. If a candidate or proposal received no votes, enter zero in the proper space. Write all totals legibly in both words and figures.

NOTE: Two additional tally sheets and Statement of Votes must be completed for the city or township if 1.) the election involved is a statewide August primary or statewide November general election 2.) city or township offices appear on the ballot and 3.) the city or township maintains its own canvassing board. (The city or township clerk will provide direction if additional tally sheets and Statement of Votes are needed.)

WHAT IF'S

SPOILED BALLOT – A voter who spoils his or her ballot may obtain a replacement ballot. Instruct the voter to fold the ballot so that the votes are concealed and the stub is exposed. Draw a line through the first ballot number and record the new ballot number next to the voter's name in the Poll Book and on the original Application to Vote. Write the word "spoiled" on the back of the ballot. Remove the ballot stub and place the ballot and stub in the envelope labeled "SPOILED BALLOTS."

EXPOSED BALLOT – If a voter deliberately shows any person in the polling place how he or she has voted, the ballot is void and must be rejected; the voter is not permitted to vote. (Exceptions: A voter who has exposed his/her ballot due to requesting assistance in voting or having a minor child accompany him/her in the voting booth.) Mark the ballot "REJECTED FOR EXPOSURE." Write "REJECTED" next to the voter's name in the Poll Book. Place the rejected ballot into the special envelope labeled "REJECTED." Write the reason for the rejection on the outside of the envelope.

PROCESSING WRITE-IN VOTES

Write-in votes are not processed or tallied until after 8:00 p.m. The following validity standards and procedures must be observed for each office in which a write-in vote is cast.

Step 1: Determine if the write-in vote has been properly cast for a declared write-in candidate.

- The write-in must be written in or affixed by means of a sticker in the blank space provided for write-in votes.
- The write-in must be cast for an officially declared write-in candidate. (The clerk will provide a list of the officially declared write-in candidates and the office or offices under which each declared write-in candidate may receive votes.)
- The voter must have entered a valid ballot marking in the square preceding the candidate's name.

If the write-in vote has been properly cast for a declared write-in candidate, proceed to Steps 2, 3, 4 and 5; if the write-in vote has not been properly cast for a declared write-in candidate, there is no need to proceed or record the invalid write-in.

Step 2: Determine if the write-in vote caused an **overvote**.

- An overvote results when the number of *valid* write-in votes cast, *combined* with the number of votes cast for candidates whose names are printed on the ballot, *exceed the maximum number of valid votes allowed* for the office.
- If the *valid* write-in vote was cast for a *partisan office* and the election is a *general election*, “straight party” votes are not considered when determining if an office is overvoted.

Step 3: Determine if the *valid* write-in vote caused a **crossover vote**. (A crossover vote results when valid votes are cast in *more than one party section* in a *partisan primary*; *if the election involved is not a partisan primary, skip this step.*)

Step 4: If it is determined that the write-in vote has been properly cast for a declared write-in candidate; did not create an overvote; and did not create a crossover vote (if a partisan primary), record the candidate’s name in the Poll Book. Tally the valid votes for the candidate on the Write-In Tally page in the Poll Book. A candidate’s name must be recorded as entered by the voter; a separate tally is made for each variation used, e.g.: Bob Smith, Trustee, 3 votes – Robert Smith, Trustee, 2 votes – Mr. Smith, Trustee, 6 votes.

Step 5: Transfer the total number of votes for each candidate to the Statement of Votes. Make a separate entry for each variation of an individual’s name as explained above in Step 4.

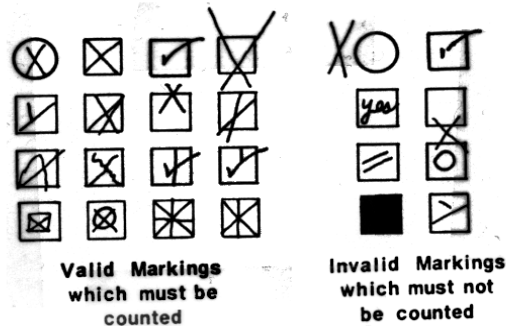
INVALID WRITE-IN VOTES

The following write-in votes are invalid and cannot be recognized:

- A write-in vote cast for an individual who did not file a Declaration of Intent with the clerk.
- A write-in vote cast for a candidate whose name is already printed on the ballot under the same office.

An invalid write-in vote *does not* cause an overvote or a crossover vote (if a partisan primary); invalid write-in votes are ignored when determining whether an office has been overvoted or if votes cast in the partisan section are invalid due to a crossover vote.

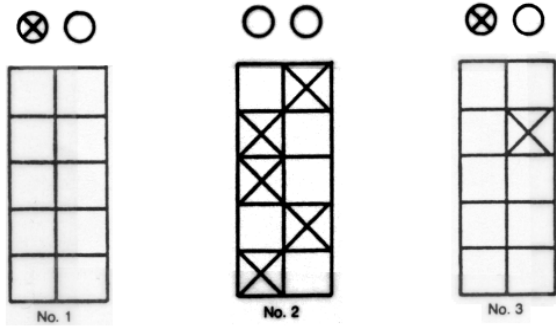
DETERMINING THE VALIDITY OF BALLOT MARKINGS



The following distinguishes the difference between valid and invalid ballot markings:

1. A cross, the intersection of which is within or on the line of the circle or square, is valid.
2. A check mark, the angle of which is within a circle or square, is valid.
3. A cross is valid even though one or both lines are duplicated, provided that the lines intersect within or on the line of the circle or square.
4. A mark is valid if two lines meet, but do not cross, within or on the line of the square or circle.
5. A vote is *not* counted if the voter's choice is not clear. An unclear vote does not void the entire ballot if other portions of the ballot contain valid votes.
6. All properly marked votes must be counted; invalid votes or unvoted portions of a ballot do not void the entire ballot.
7. Ballots properly marked with black, blue or any other colored pencil or ink are valid and must be counted.
8. If it is clearly evident that a ballot has been marked or mutilated **by the voter for the purpose of distinguishing it**, the ballot is void. *(A distinguishing mark is a mark which was made on purpose to identify the ballot; normal erasures and corrections made by a voter, including "block outs," are not considered distinguishing marks.)*

STRAIGHT, SPLIT AND MIXED TICKETS



Partisan general election ballots are divided into three general classifications:

Straight Ticket: A ballot that contains votes for every candidate in one party and no votes for candidates in any other party. A straight ticket is voted by placing a valid ballot marking in the circle at the top of one party column or by placing a valid ballot marking in the square before the name of every candidate in one party column. *(See illustration 1 above.)*

Mixed Ticket: A ballot that contains votes for candidates in more than one party. A valid ballot marking does not appear at the heading of any party column. *(See illustration 2 above.)*

Split Ticket: A ballot which contains a valid ballot marking at the top of a party column and valid markings before the names of candidates in other party columns. On split ticket ballots, count a vote for each candidate in the voted party column--except for those candidates whose names have been crossed off by the voter or those candidates directly opposite the names of candidates in another party column who received votes. *(See illustration 3 above.)*

BALLOT SECURITY

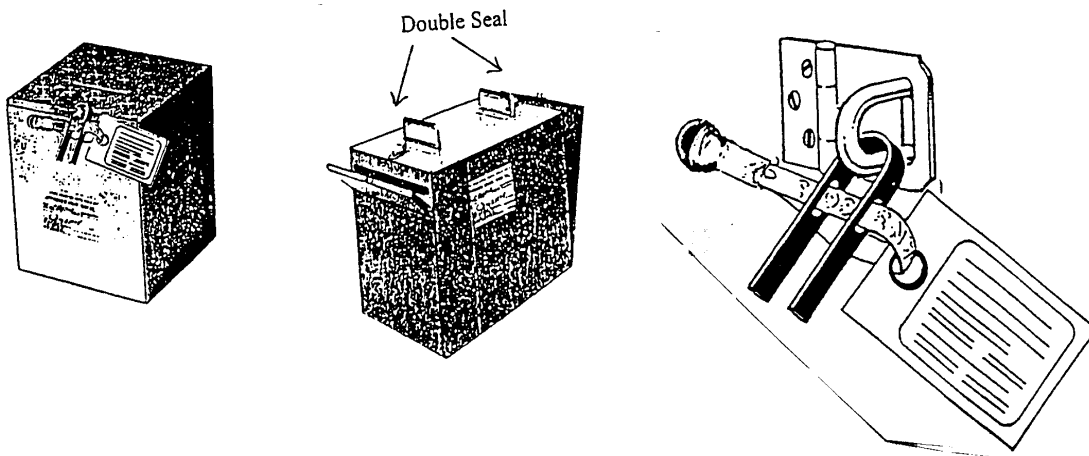
At the conclusion of the tally, all of the voted ballots must be properly packaged and secured. Under Michigan election law, all ballots must be sealed in an approved ballot container. In order to ensure proper security of the ballots, proceed as follows:

1. Tie each ballot type into a separate bundle and place the tied bundle of ballots into a

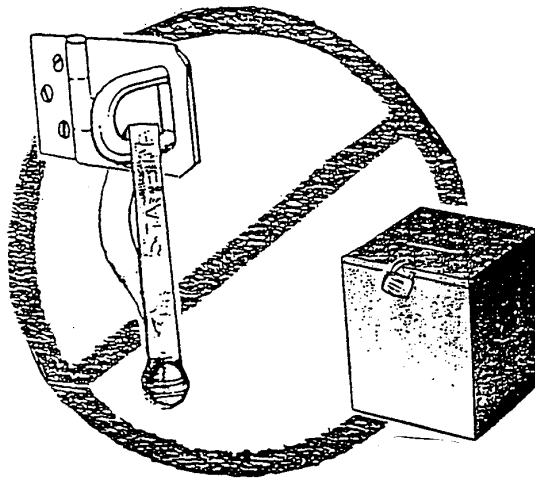
ballot bag.

2. Complete the ballot bag tag. The tag must list the types of ballots and the number of ballots placed in the bag. The tag must be signed by all inspectors present.
3. Place the ballot bag tag on a flat metal seal, close the ballot bag and seal it with the flat metal seal. (The use of a plastic tag holder is recommended.)
4. Record the number appearing on the seal used to secure the ballot bag on the certificate in the back of the Poll Book.
5. Place the sealed ballot bag and one of the tally sheets in a ballot box. (A tally sheet is not sealed in the ballot box if a combined tally sheet/Statement of Votes is used in the precinct.)
6. Complete the ballot box tag. The tag must list the types of ballots and the number of ballots which will be stored in the ballot box. The tag must be signed by all inspectors present.
7. Place the ballot box tag on a flat metal seal, close the ballot box and seal it with the flat metal seal. (The use of a plastic tag holder is recommended.)
8. The following illustrations show the CORRECT and INCORRECT way to seal a ballot container:

CORRECT Way to Seal a Ballot Container



INCORRECT Way to Seal a Ballot Container



COMPLETION OF CERTIFICATES

After securing the ballots, complete the certificates appearing in the Poll Book and in the Statement of Votes book. **DO NOT SIGN THE CERTIFICATES APPEARING IN THE POLL BOOK OR THE STATEMENT OF VOTES BOOK UNTIL ALL INFORMATION HAS BEEN ENTERED!**

DISPOSITION OF ELECTION MATERIALS

After the count has been completed, the ballots have been secured and all records have been completed, forward the election documents to the appropriate officials as follows:

- Envelope #1** (to the County Clerk): The Poll Book, one Statement of Votes and one tally sheet. (If precinct delegates were elected, include the precinct delegate tally sheet.)
2. **Envelope #2** (to the Judge of Probate): One Statement of Votes and one tally sheet.
3. **Envelope #3** (to the City or Township Clerk): The Applications to Vote. Include one Statement of Votes containing city or township election results if instructed to do so by the clerk.
4. Send the sealed ballot box containing the voted ballots and one of the tally sheets/ books to the city or township clerk. (A tally sheet is not sealed in the ballot box containing the voted ballots if a combined tally sheet /Statement of Votes is used in the precinct.)

5. Send all unused ballots, the envelope containing the spoiled ballots (if any), and the envelopes containing the rejected ballots (if any) to the city or township clerk. The city or township clerk will issue a receipt upon the return of the unused ballots.
6. If an A.V. counting board is not used, send the A.V. envelopes, A.V. lists, A.V. applications and the rejected and unopened A.V. envelopes to the city or township clerk.